



# Santa Rita

Union School District

57 Russell Road  
Salinas, CA 93906-4325

[www.santaritaschools.org](http://www.santaritaschools.org)

(831) 443-7200  
Fax 442-1729

January 22, 2002

Honorable Robert O'Farrell  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
Grand Jury – County of Monterey  
Salinas, CA 93902

Dear Judge O'Farrell:

## RE: RESPONSE TO THE 2001 MONTEREY COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

I am writing in response to the Final Report of the 2001 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury regarding the training of school board members.

I must comment on the investigation procedures. As superintendent of one of the 24 school districts "investigated," neither I nor anyone in my district office recalls being asked questions by the grand jury regarding this topic. Since we fund and coordinate training for the board, it was a major oversight not to include us in the grand jury's investigation. If questionnaires were sent to board members, the failure to gather information from district staff invalidates some of the grand jury's findings as you will see in this response. Future "investigations" need to involve at least the superintendents who can gather information from appropriate people and give a comprehensive answer to questions.

**Finding #1:** "Not all school boards in Monterey County budget for or take advantage of available school board training."

District Response: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding.

Although Santa Rita may not designate a specific amount in the budget under the exact topic of "Board Training," that is because (1) the amounts vary widely from year to year, and (2) it has sufficient funds set aside for training in other object codes to cover board training. Also, occasionally, Santa Rita and other districts may find themselves in a fiscal situation which limits training for everyone. This may indeed be the case for many next year if state funding is severely cut as predicted.

*Serving the students of Santa Rita --*

**Superintendent:**  
Dr. Bob McLaughlin  
[bmclaugh@monterey.k12.ca.us](mailto:bmclaugh@monterey.k12.ca.us)

**Director of Fiscal Services:**  
Ms. Janet Tucker  
[jtucker@monterey.k12.ca.us](mailto:jtucker@monterey.k12.ca.us)

**Board of Trustees:**  
Mrs. Elva Arellano  
Mrs. Sue Daly  
Mr. Jon Sanborn  
Mr. Tom Spencer  
Mr. Perry Vargas

**Schools:**  
Gavilan View Middle  
La Joya Elementary  
Santa Rita Elementary

**Assistant Superintendent:**  
Mr. Jim Fontana  
[jfontana@monterey.k12.ca.us](mailto:jfontana@monterey.k12.ca.us)

**Director of Student Services:**  
Mr. Tom Guajardo  
[tguajard@monterey.k12.ca.us](mailto:tguajard@monterey.k12.ca.us)

Since the average tenure of Santa Rita board members last year was about 10 years, the training needs are significantly different than new members. The board is constantly updated on current educational, legislative and legal topics in a variety of ways: periodicals from education associations such as CSBA, participation in board subcommittees, subscriptions to topical services such as Ed Source, updates from staff on current issues affecting our district and potential strategies of value to us, attendance by board members to events sponsored by educational organizations such the County School Board Association. True, there are events which members do not attend, but attending everything would be impossible for members who also have full-time occupations of their own. It is clear that training which is perceived to be important to the district is taken advantage of by board members. For example, when the district was investigating Interest Based Bargaining two years ago, board members joined staff in a conference in Sacramento and in a three day training in the district. The Board participates in a two-day Strategic Planning review each year and has a designated representative to the District Curriculum Council.

**Finding #2:** “School boards have ultimate responsibility for school district resources and personnel, including the superintendent.”

District Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

**Recommendation #1:** “Provide a budget for school board training.”

District’s Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or not reasonable.

Santa Rita School District will continue to provide funding for school board training at the direction of the board based upon their expressed needs and within the fiscal limitations of the district. Whether such funding is given a specific designated object code label of “Board Training” is not a significant issue. If a board training expense is expected to occur in the next budget year and is known at the time of the creation of the budget, then it may be designated as such in the budget. Otherwise, board training expenses will be part of broader budget categories for staff development. This in no way limits the board to participate in appropriate and needed training.

**Recommendation #2:** “Provide address to training, at a minimum in the following areas: parliamentary procedure, Ralph M Brown Act, budget management, team building, cooperative boardsmanship, California Education Code and new legislation.”

District’s Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

This recommendation is in the process of being implemented as part of the normal procedures of the district in both a formal and informal, group and individual manner to best meet the individual needs of members. Such training occurs over time as topics arise in the normal course of business. For example, training about the budget occurs formally as the budget is prepared and informally as a member has a question. The combination is the most effective since learning best occurs when it is practical and motivated.

**Recommendation #3:** “Work with Monterey County Office of Education to develop school board training.”

Since the average tenure of Santa Rita board members last year was about 10 years, the training needs are significantly different than new members. The board is constantly updated on current educational, legislative and legal topics in a variety of ways: periodicals from education associations such as CSBA, participation in board subcommittees, subscriptions to topical services such as Ed Source, updates from staff on current issues affecting our district and potential strategies of value to us, attendance by board members to events sponsored by educational organizations such the County School Board Association. True, there are events which members do not attend, but attending everything would be impossible for members who also have full-time occupations of their own. It is clear that training which is perceived to be important to the district is taken advantage of by board members. For example, when the district was investigating Interest Based Bargaining two years ago, board members joined staff in a conference in Sacramento and in a three day training in the district. The Board participates in a two-day Strategic Planning review each year and has a designated representative to the District Curriculum Council.

**Finding #2:** “School boards have ultimate responsibility for school district resources and personnel, including the superintendent.”

District Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

**Recommendation #1:** “Provide a budget for school board training.”

District’s Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or not reasonable.

Santa Rita School District will continue to provide funding for school board training at the direction of the board based upon their expressed needs and within the fiscal limitations of the district. Whether such funding is given a specific designated object code label of “Board Training” is not a significant issue. If a board training expense is expected to occur in the next budget year and is known at the time of the creation of the budget, then it may be designated as such in the budget. Otherwise, board training expenses will be part of broader budget categories for staff development. This in no way limits the board to participate in appropriate and needed training.

**Recommendation #2:** “Provide address to training, at a minimum in the following areas: parliamentary procedure, Ralph M Brown Act, budget management, team building, cooperative boardsmanship, California Education Code and new legislation.”

District’s Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

This recommendation is in the process of being implemented as part of the normal procedures of the district in both a formal and informal, group and individual manner to best meet the individual needs of members. Such training occurs over time as topics arise in the normal course of business. For example, training about the budget occurs formally as the budget is prepared and informally as a member has a question. The combination is the most effective since learning best occurs when it is practical and motivated.

**Recommendation #3:** “Work with Monterey County Office of Education to develop school board training.”

District's Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

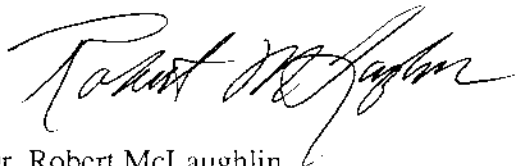
This recommendation is in the process of being implemented as part of the normal procedures of the district. For example, new board members attended the County's new board member training last December.

**Recommendation #4:** "Attend as many California School Board Association workshops as determined necessary."

District's Response: The recommendation will not be implemented as written because it is not reasonable to limit training to just CSBA nor require attendance at workshops when information can be gained elsewhere at less expense or with less effort.

This recommendation is in the process of being implemented using a wider variety of providers. The use of CSBA as the exclusive trainer is inappropriate. There are other organizations such as Small School District Association (SSDA), Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), Coalition for Adequate School Housing (CASH), and many others which provide important training which may be more appropriate for our district's needs. At this time the board has expressed interest in attending a SSDA Conference next March.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert McLaughlin", written in a cursive style.

Dr. Robert McLaughlin  
District Superintendent

C: Dr. Bill Barr, County Superintendent of Schools  
Board of Trustees for Santa Rita Union School District